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Female *Inboekelinge* in the South African Republic, 1850–1880

Fred Morton Q1

Adela was her only name. In the 1860s she lived with her 'master' Van Zweel in Pretoria, capital of the new Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) (South African Republic) of the Transvaal. There she remembered seeing other children brought into town in wagons and hawked about. Every white person in town seemed to have at least one or two black children. ZAR President M.W. Pretorius, after whose father Pretoria was named, had his order in for a 'half dozen at a time'.[1] Adela knew that she came from someplace in the Soutpansberg, but exactly where in this mountain range populated by VhaVenda, northern Sotho and other language groups, she had forgotten. Her only memory of home was of the thatched rondavels on the day they were set on fire. She recalled scampering out into the open, seeing Boers on horseback riding about, shooting down men and women or herding them into a cattle kraal, where they were murdered. She and the other children were rounded up, lifted onto horses or driven ahead to the laager, where they were parcelled out. Van Zweel took her and rode back to Pretoria.[2]

Adela was among thousands of African children taken into slavery in the ZAR. And she was typical. She had been acquired by Boers taking part in commando raids along the border or in hunting and trading expeditions outside the ZAR. Almost all the slaves brought into the ZAR were children.[3] These youngsters were forced to walk or ride tens, sometimes hundreds, of kilometres over days, weeks, and occasionally even months before being handed over to individual Boer or English owners. Those too small or too weak to trek by foot were carried in ox-wagons or on horseback in sacks or baskets.

In one respect, however, Adela is unusual. Hers is one of the few surviving slave accounts of these raids and the lives of the victims. Since the father of President Pretorius and his fellow Voortrekkers had signed the Sand River Convention in 1852, slave raiding and trading had been illegal. Sellers and buyers tried therefore to keep their activities out of public view. When entering ZAR towns, particularly when high-ranking ZAR officials returned at the head of a commando, the captured youngsters were classified as 'orphans'. They were registered as 'apprentices'

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(*inboekelinge*) allotted to a master, and commonly sold from one owner to another. Outsiders were kept away from them, and the *inboekelinge* were kept ignorant of their languages and origins. They grew up speaking Dutch and were given single names like January or April if they were boys, Sophia or Odela if they were girls. Only a few reached adulthood knowing who they were, much less telling the world about their pasts (perhaps Adela's name – 'Noble One' – destined her story to be told). But there is no doubt that Africans who had not been enslaved knew what might be in store for them. 'We are Kaffirs [to you] which means we are dogs or monkeys to be shot down or otherwise ill-treated as you may find convenient', wrote Khama III to ZAR Commandant L.M. Du Plessis from the Ngwato capital of Shoshong. '[You are] wicked men. . .buying and selling black people for less money that they sell their horses and cows, and treat them worse than their dogs'.[4] Thanks to the words left behind by Adela and others, enough information survives to reconstruct how slave trading was conducted in the old ZAR and to outline these children's experiences in the years following their enslavement. Regrettably, the record is fragmentary.

What is clear, however, is that their experiences reveal a form of slavery distinct from other systems in Africa and elsewhere. Bound mainly to isolated white (Boer) farm households geared to cattle and stock raising, hunting, and fruit farming, slave girls provided domestic service until their late teens, at which point they appear to have been married off to male slaves and allowed to live with them and raise their own children, though the ex-*inboekelinge* family, including the children, remained in quasi-service to their masters. By the 1880s, as diamond- and gold-mining spurred industrialization and urbanization, such farms declined, as did commando raids and the supply and demand for apprenticed labour. Thereafter clusters of ex-*inboekelinge*, distinguished by their Dutch names and use of Dutch as a first language, settled on the fringes of towns.[5] To some degree, the ex-*inboekelinge* (often referred to by the Boers as *orlaams or oorlams kaffers*) resemble the so-called Cape Coloured and other Dutch-speaking non-European groups (Griqua, Kora, Bastaards) of the Cape, except that they had originated as Bantu-speaking black South Africans inside or along the borders of what became the South African Republic and had entered service after the arrival of the *Voortrekkers* north of the Vaal River in the 1840s. In contrast to the slaves of the Cape Colony, the *inboekelinge* discussed here were an indigenous, captive element indistinguishable racially from the African population but stigmatized by their servitude and loss of African cultural ways. Rarely were they able to reattach themselves as adults to their original or related societies. Grown women among them were not wanted as wives by men who had not themselves been uprooted by war or migration. However, they gained admission to detached communities, such as those on missions, and found spouses among the "new men" created by new economic forces.

Slave Raids and Slave Trading in the South African Republic

Most slaves were captured as children by Boer commandoes. Children not kept by individual commando members were brought into ZAR towns for registration and

exchange. As a result, slave routes corresponded to the main arteries connecting the ZAR towns with its borders, and the towns where slaves were exchanged corresponded to the locations where commandoes assembled prior to setting out and returned before dispersing. Thus, Mooi River (Potchefstroom) and Pretoria were the most important commando assembly points in the 1850s and 1860s, and also the most active slave-trading centres, receiving slaves captured from African communities bordering the ZAR to the west and north/northeast, respectively. Children seized from the BaTlhaping, BaRolong, BaTlharo, BaMmanaana Kgatla and BaKwena were sold or exchanged in Potchefstroom. No main route connected Potchefstroom to these raiding zones, which were reached overland strictly by horseback. Magaliesberg (Rustenburg) served as a commando assembly point and trading centre in the early 1850s, but Pretoria (founded 1855) soon became the main trafficking point for children brought in from the north.[6]

By far the largest number of slaves was generated by commandoes entering the Soutpansberg/Blouberg/Waterberg to attack the Langa and Sebetiele AmaNdebele, Vha-Venda, Moletsi BaKwena and BaGananwa, among others.[7] These commandoes were often akin to military contingents, travelling with cannon, ox-wagons, large numbers of armed African auxiliaries, and slaughter stock. Rather than launch quick raids, they preferred to besiege Africans in caves or on mountaintops and starve or parch them into submission. Away for months at a time, they followed the main Schoemansdal road leading north from Pretoria through Nylstroom and Potgietersrus (near Pietersburg). In addition to slave children, these large commandoes returned with herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats. Lydenburg/Ohrigstad in Mpumulanga also received slaves taken in raids on the Ndzundza AmaNdebele, BaKopa and BaPedi, and these were sent in turn to Pretoria via Middelburg.[8]

Some of the slaves in Boer hands were obtained by their African auxiliaries. The Swazi were helpful in attacks on the BaPedi, and the BaKgatla of chief Kgamanyane joined future ZAR President Paul Kruger on a number of commandoes. Kgamanyane, who with many of his followers resided on Kruger's farm Saulspoort, boasted in the *leboko* (praise song) he had composed of 'seizing young children. . .even infants at the breast [and giving them] to the red men [*bahibidu*]'.[9]

The rest of the slaves were purchased outside ZAR and brought into the Transvaal by hunters and traders along established communication links. A popular route was the 'Road to the North' through the BaKwena capitals of Kolobeng/Dimawe/Molepolole, to the BaNgwato capital of Shoshong via the Ngotwane River, then on to Boteti and Nata, before heading west toward Ngamiland. In the 1840s and 1850s, Griqua and Boer ivory hunters visiting Ngamiland from Philippolis, Ohrigstad, Marico and Rustenburg often came back from Ngamiland with a few young slaves and on some occasions, with large 'batches'. They purchased them from Letsholathebe, king of the BaTawana, whose troops had raided them from Bushmen, BaYeyi and Damara. In 1869 Marico Field-Cornet and hunter Jan Viljoen, together with Lucas Marthinus Swartz and Hendrik van Zyl, trekked back from Ngamiland with seventy items of "black wool" in their ox-wagons.[10]

Another early trading post was Delagoa Bay (Maputo), which the Boers and their Portuguese trading partners visited to purchase slaves for importation into the Transvaal via Ohrigstad/Lydenburg.[11] Slaves could also be purchased from the Swazi. On visits to Swaziland in the 1840s, hunters such as Paul Kruger returned with slaves and ivory.[12]

Upon their arrival in one or another of the ZAR towns, these young *inboekelinge* were registered and often exchanged in ones and twos with local town dwellers, urrounding farmers, and traders and wagon-drivers visiting from as far away as Natal. In the 1850s and 1860s travelers in the interior commonly found that every white farm had at least several young African children servants and workers.[13] Exchange values varied widely, from £3 to £30 depending on times, locations and the perceived qualities of the slave. According to ex-slave Rachel, who lived in Pretoria with her master before being sold to an African wagon-driver from Natal, children were sold in that town for '£3 to £8, according to size'. Rachel herself had been bought for '£6 and a cow in calf' and was resold twice each time for £6 – the approximate value of a young ox. Ex-slave Odela, sold for £30 to a 'Natal Kaffir wagon-driver', had first lived in Pretoria when prices ranged from £6 to £12, depending on age.[14] Girls fetched the highest prices in Pretoria and Potchefstroom.

Female Inboekelinge

In the 1840s and 1850s, Boer trekkers migrated into the Transvaal bringing with them the institution of *inboekstelsel* (literally, registered apprenticeship, a euphemism for slavery) and the ideal of the large, single-family pastoral farm, for which slaves and servants were needed. By the mid-1860s, roughly ten per cent of the ZAR population consisted of slaves acquired in this fashion.[15] Though impossible to determine with certainty, the available evidence suggests that a significant proportion, though perhaps not a majority, of the captured children were girls. Sold, exchanged and eventually put to work in individual homesteads, female *inboekelinge* did the laundry, housecleaning, cooking, childcare and knitting, among other chores. Their role was to assist the large nuclear white farm family, in which the husband, his unmarried sons and male slave attendants were away for extended periods tending stock (mainly cattle), hunting, trading or participating in commando raids. The largest slave owners, who were also the well-to-do farmers and land owners, were apt to be absent even more frequently, as they made up the majority of elected or appointed officials.[16] Laws governing *inboekstelsel* required owners to release their apprentices in their early twenties, but enforcement was lax.

General references and brief biographical sketches of eight female slaves show that most lived on isolated farms where they lost any memory of their origins, parents or kinfolk. Young and intentionally deracinated, they were acculturated in a patriarchal, Dutch-speaking environment in which they remained dependent on their masters for all their needs. Prominent slave owners exemplified a paternalism that was rooted in Boer religious and racial assumptions, particularly in Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) communities. Some leaders, the very men who led commando raids for slaves and

cattle, had their young *inboekelinge* taught Dutch, and in some cases, Christian catechism and even bible literacy.

Among the better-documented cases of female slaves is that of Matlhodi Kekana aka Paulina, as told by her descendants to her grandson, Naboth Mokgatle.[17] In or around 1853, while young, Matlhodi was captured in the Pietersburg area of the northern Transvaal during a Boer commando raid on the Langa AmaNdebele followers of chief Mokopane. She became the *inboekeling* of a prominent Boer, remembered by Mokgatle's family as 'KaMongoele'. Mokgatle does not mention the Boer's given name, but the evidence – his Tswana nickname, which played on his intense religious piety (*Kamangole*, 'on the knees'), the Christian name he gave to Matlhodi and the close ties he had with a prominent BaFokeng chief near his farm – points to him as none other than Paul Kruger. In 1853, when Matlhodi was captured, Kruger was a Rustenburg veldcornet and one of the leaders of the raid on Mokopane.[18] Since becoming a young man, Kruger had combined hunting with slave trading and, as an assistant veldcornet in 1845, had been an active participant in commando raids for cattle and children.[19] In 1852 he was elected a full veldcornet and began to acquire farms through sharp-dealing. He led many commando raids while his political star continued to rise. After Paulina was attached to his household, Kruger went on to become Rustenburg district Commandant, ZAR Commandant General and eventually ZAR President.

Paulina's responsibilities as Kruger's slave included working in the house, where as a young woman she was trained as a cook for his large family and its many visitors. She gained a reputation for her 'European' style cooking, which together with her attractive features caught the attention of *kgosi* (chief) Mokgatle, whose people lived on portions of Kruger's farms and who, according to the traditions collected by Naboth Mokgatle, visited Kruger often. *Kgosi* Mokgatle, on his way to becoming wealthy, wanted Paulina as one of his wives and as his cook. It is revealing of Kruger, known for his intense religious conservatism as much as for his avarice and ambition, that he demanded bridewealth in cattle from Mokgatle. A 'number of cattle' then changed hands, at which point Paulina transferred her residence to Mokgatle's capital (Phokeng) and began her life as Mokgatle's wife. She bore him four children, of whom two survived.

Paulina's transfer from Kruger to Mokgatle reflects the purposes to which slave women were put by Transvaal's emerging elite. Kruger and Mokgatle were allies in an arrangement that gave Kruger access to Mokgatle's male Bafokeng followers as military auxiliaries and their wives and daughters as seasonal agricultural labourers on Kruger's farms.[20] For their service to Kruger's commandoes, Mokgatle's men received cattle booty and possibly women captured in raids. They were allowed also to keep guns for hunting game, and were exempted from labour service to the Boers, while Mokgatle used the Kruger connection to concentrate his followers on Kruger's farms, keep their loyalty through tribute, and build up his personal wealth. Owning farms and encouraging chiefs to collect their followers thereon enabled men like Kruger to magnify their wealth and influence in the ZAR, just as Mokgatle and other chiefs were able to increase their followers and become rich.[21] Mokgatle achieved a much higher standard of living than most *Boers* in the Transvaal at the time.

His rising material status and purchasing power enhanced his stature among white and black. He owned guns, carpentry and metal-working tools, ploughs, grindstones, wagons and wore European clothing. Standing near to his large house was a wagon house and an enormous stone cattle kraal. The white doctor from Rustenburg paid him house calls, often staying overnight in the guestroom featherbed, and a white tutor was employed to instruct his children in English. By the early 1860s, Mokgatle and his town had become a tourist attraction, where white visitors to Rustenburg were run out for the spectacle. Paulina, groomed by Kruger to cook and serve food fit for Transvaal's new royalty, was acquired by Mokgatle to live near his main house and cater to him and his white visitors:

> One large house belonging to one of the principal wives of the Chief had a number of compartments beautifully moulded and polished, with great taste, and furnished among other utensils with Basins, Cups, and Saucers, Pots and Pans, and even Foot pans, bought at Rustenburg. There was also a Box of Tools, which were turned to good account, for they sat us down upon chairs made after European models. . .and Tables the same.[22]

In the ZAR, Paulina represented the slave/servant/wife as emblematic of her owner's/husband's ruling status. As a domesticated version of a European servant, she was expected to understand and adhere to the preferences of the prevailing culture, mirror its appearance and language, submit to its authority, and aspire to its approval. She had entered the category of *oorlamse* ('civilized' *kaffir*) and, as a black female, Paulina enabled leading Boers like Kruger to convince themselves that the ZAR at heart was committed to elevating its black population and that they were meeting their civic and religious duty by educating *inboekelinge* in Dutch ways. The ZAR leadership, which had been lambasted in the English press in South Africa for conducting slave raids, used *oorlamse* like Paulina and westernizing chiefs like Mokgatle to counter the popular notion that ZAR Boers were themselves half-civilized bumpkins running a predatory operation.

Paulina's usefulness, in turn, depended on her acquisition of the skills needed by a prosperous white family aspiring to modernize – Dutch, domestic refinement, familiarity with cooking, cleaning, laundry, sewing, and a host of related knowledge. Kruger's farms, and others in Rustenburg district, were introducing irrigation to support fruit orchards, tobacco and cotton fields, while breeding trek oxen, tanning hides, and acquiring ivory for export to the Cape. Young *inboekelinge*, rewarded for their attentiveness, and isolated from their original homes and the Africans living in surrounding chiefs' towns, were trained as sawyers, tanners, lime-burners, masons, thatchers, ploughmen, wagon-drivers and marksmen.

Paulina's sexuality was inconsequential for promoting this material Dutch culture, though her attractiveness as a young woman threatened her value to the Kruger homestead. Mixed offspring are known to have been born in this area.[23] Yet, the scandal arising would have been devastating for any Boer male member of the DRC-connected elite. As will be discussed below, white men who impregnated or were known to have sexual relations with or to have physically abused black females in their care were

publicly denounced. It is therefore logical that Kruger would have accepted Mokgatle's offer to take Paulina off his hands before she entered or was forced into a liaison, while she had value to Mokgatle as a virgin, so that Kruger could demand cattle in return. His *inboekelinge* was, after all, a form of property investment.

She was also given to outbursts. Her grandson relates the family tradition that, after being acquired by Mokgatle as his wife, Matlhodi (Paulina) was apt, when in a cross mood, to swear in her original northern Sotho (SeTswana), a language she had somehow kept alive over the years while growing up and learning in a Dutch-speaking world. She also understood at this time that her father was Kekana, a chief among the Langa AmaNdebele of Mokopane. This anecdote is full of possible meanings. Matlhodi was said to have been captured when only two or three years old. If she knew Northern Sotho when captured, she must have been at least six or seven at the time, or, if she was as young as the story goes, then she would have been permitted to learn, perhaps even been coached in, Northern Sotho after joining Kruger's household, and told of her background. The latter is not improbable, because other youngsters from her area likely grew up in and around Kruger's home. Paulina's master, too, was fluent in SeTswana.[24] It is altogether reasonable to assume that Kruger's ability to communicate with this young child in her mother tongue served to expand and sustain her ability in her own language. His command of her language would have made her more suppliant to his will, though retaining her past could not have made it easy for Paulina to be reconciled with her present circumstances. And her departure from his household might be attributable to Kruger's awareness and disquiet that Paulina was more apt as a mature woman to express dissatisfaction with her servile life. Anticipating her resistance, or rebelliousness, he converted her into cattle.

Once married, though to a chief, and though claiming to be a chief's daughter herself, Matlhodi's slave past relegated her to an uncertain status among Mokgatle's wives and followers. Mokgatle kept her close to his own house, a sign of high rank in his eyes. Mokgatle placed her in the compound (*lapa*) of his recently deceased first wife, Nkhubu, and she became caretaker of Nkhubu's children, her cattle and her lands.[25] However, according to the story told to Naboth Mokgatle, Matlhodi was regarded by the BaFokeng as a lowly person. In attempts at repelling their insults, she swore in Northern Sotho and asserted she was the daughter of a Langa chief, but she was not believed. Only after her children were born was her background discovered, her royal provenance acknowledged by the BaFokeng, and her status formalized through a second marriage rite, this time between the Kekana family and Mokgatle. Her rehabilitation notwithstanding, the Langa-Fokeng connection practically speaking was at best tenuous and, in the long term, a liability for her children. Her sons pursued no contact with their mother's homeland, and neither the BaFokeng nor the Boer government considered either of her sons or her foster sons, the children of Mokgatle's first wife Nkhubu, as eligible to succeed Mokgatle.[26] Matlhodi, who never visited her original homeland, lived permanently in Phokeng, dying there, completely blind, at an old age.

The relatively privileged life of Matlhodi aka Paulina may be compared with that of female *inboekelinge* who were owned by persons of less wealth and political stature

than Paul Kruger. Certain characteristics apply generally. Like Paulina, other young girls were captured amidst violent, often traumatic circumstances, grew up in a Dutch-speaking environment far from their original homes, did domestic work, and remained isolated from other Africans until their maturity. As young women they sought ways to leave their white masters, often through liaisons with African men, free and otherwise. They were married off for cattle or money and were unable to return to their homeland. Some escaped, thanks to the new trade routes travelled by a new phenomenon in the South African highveld, the African wagon-driver. The truncated accounts of females that follow, derived mainly from F.W. Chesson, represent *inboekelinge* who made it out of slavery and come with a caveat – they are of limited use for generalizing about the thousands of girls and women unable to extricate themselves from bondage in the ZAR.[27]

Odela was 'very little' when she was taken by Boers in the Soutpansberg in northern Transvaal. Yet, she remembered in some detail the horror surrounding her capture. The commando came before daybreak, shot old people at random, and herded 'big people. . .into stone kraals' (presumably where they were shot – a common phenomenon on such raids). She must have been taken to Lydenburg, *ingeboekt* (registered as an *inboekeling*) and sold off, because she remembers that while growing up she 'often saw commandos go out and the people return with children'. She had seen ZAR Commandant General Stephanus Schoeman and President Marthinus W. Pretorius among them. Children were sold in town for between £6 and £12. From another woman from Soutpansberg, living then in Pretoria, she heard that children were being brought there for sale as well. Another girl, Adela, whose experience of capture while very young introduced this paper, stayed in Pretoria until she was fourteen with her master Van Zweel, at which point he sold her for £30 to a 'Natal Kaffir wagon-driver' in the employ of an English trading firm. She relocated with him to Natal and lived with him for a number of years. African wagon-drivers were among the few who had money in their pockets, the means to travel, and knowledge of the region. The circumstances of their employment suggest they were part of an outcast element if not themselves ex-*inboekelinge*, without suitable connections to an African chiefs community to marry in the usual way. Adela was typical among *inboekelinge* and *oorlamse* in gaining acceptance among other dislocated Africans, especially on mission stations.

Another extricated through marriage to a wagon-driver was Rachel, who like Paulina, had been enslaved during a Boer raid on her people, the Langa AmaNdebele. After the men of her community were driven off or killed, the Boers rounded up women and children, shooting the former. Small children were placed on horses, the older ones forced to run ahead, to the laager. Rachel was allotted to one of the commando members, with whom she lived for several years. She was then sold to a Pretoria man for £6 and a cow in calf. When grown, she was sold for £6 to a Natal wagon-driver, who beat her until she ran away and returned to her Boer ex-master. She was again sold for £6 to yet another wagon-driver, who remained in Pretoria with her for two years. When he left with her for Natal, her master confiscated all her property. She never saw her registration papers or those of any of the other *inboekelinge*, and like them was whipped if she raised the question. Once in Natal, she remained with her husband.

Not all women needed marriage to escape. Some ran away on their own. An example is Leah of Mzilikazi's AmaNdebele. Leah was captured as a child together with her young sister by the Boers and their African allies in one of the raids and battles in 1837, when Mzilikazi was still in the western Transvaal. She and other young captives were taken to the *laager*, from which the raid had been launched. She remembers that a 'great number of cattle . . .and a very great number of children, great and small', were parcelled out among commando members, and she was separated from her sister. For the next six years she lived with her master, whom she does not name, and received food and clothing in return for domestic service. Leah makes no mention as to where she lived, but members of the commando that captured her and the other children included people who settled in the future Orange Free State and parts of the ZAR. Leah accompanied her owner to Pietermaritzburg, where he had 'produce' to sell. Just before he returned upcountry, she ran away. She joined the Wesleyan mission society, married, had children and earned money by 'taking in washing' presumably from white residents. Another example is Sylvia, who had been brought together with her siblings and mother from the Cape by her master William Neethling into Lydenburg area of the Transvaal, did domestic and heavy field work. When put to service as an ox-wagon leader on a trip back to the Cape, she absconded and was never seen again.[28]

Another escapee was Sophia of Zululand who was captured during a war between the Boers and the AmaZulu. She was among children and women rounded up from hiding places 'in the kloofs' following the defeat of their menfolk. The children were taken away on horseback and their mothers ordered back on threat of being shot. Sophia's mother 'followed for some distance but at last I lost sight of her'. After living with the Boers in the Transvaal many years and despairing of being released from her apprenticeship or receiving any wages, she heard of the English in Natal from 'Natal Kaffir waggon-drivers and leaders' and decided to escape and seek refuge with them. One night she ran to the house of an Englishman who had a 'Dutch' (Boer) wife 'who knew me'. The wife hid Sophia until her husband took her in his wagon to Natal, where she stayed, joining the Wesleyans.

As these accounts demonstrate, young women were not likely to be released from their apprenticeship or extricate themselves unless they were living in a town with main road connections to the coast or near a major trade route, and were assisted by African men using these avenues. Though the incentive to escape was common, being purchased as a wife was the most likely way out of slavery. Observed Rachel, who had been a slave in Pretoria: 'I do not know of any one having got their liberty except by marriage to men not resident there'.[29] For those who remained close to where they had been apprenticed, options to *inboekstelsel* were restricted to those created by their masters. Release from apprenticeship was governed by law – 21 years for men, 25 for women – though enforcement varied widely and depended often on the wishes of the master. Only two cases have surfaced in which mistreatment of women became grounds for punishment of their owners and the extrication of their *inboekelinge.* Such abuse was observed in towns, however, where few *inboekelinge* lived and whose treatment was more difficult to conceal from non-owners than was the case

in the countryside. The first pertained to the torture of two 8-year-old girls by one Fitzgerald, a British resident of Rustenburg, and the second, to the harsh physical abuse of a 'servant girl. . .brought from Zoutpansberg some years ago' at the hands of her owner, P.A. van Yperen, landdrost of Utrecht. Both sparked outcries from the white townspeople and resulted in court cases against the perpetrators, as well as their ostracism. Fitzgerald was divested of his *inboekeling*, but Yperen retained his servant. Utrecht's townspeople, however, helped her escape to Natal and join her lover, a Zulu migrant worker she had met in Utrecht.[30]

It is doubtful that most *inboekelinge* either had access to a court that would support their release from the terms or conditions of apprenticeship or the wherewithal to relocate elsewhere. Even if released from service, ex-*inboekelinge* were not necessarily willing or able to move away from their masters reach or deny him their labour. The few rural ex-*inboekelinge* about whom evidence is available, tended to marry while remaining on or near their respective master's farms and gave up any notion of returning to their people, even when presented with the opportunity. Apparently, growing from childhood to young adulthood in a Dutch-speaking environment had divested them of such ambitions. A case in point is Rachel of Kliprivier (not to be confused with Rachel of Pretoria), who since she was a child of 5 or 6 had lived in the service of Kliprivier farmer Gert Greyling. In the mid-1860s, during a raid led by Acting ZAR President Stephanus Schoeman on the BaBirwa of Makgatho, she had been captured along with her mother, three of her siblings and many other women and children. Her mother escaped and her siblings were distributed to other owners. Her father (Morake) survived the raid, later met up with his wife, and the two resettled with Klaas Makapans people at Makapanspoort. Soon after the British annexed the Transvaal (1877–1881), Morake began looking for his children and traced three of his four to Heidelberg district, where he asked Heidelberg landdrost Carl Ueckermann to release them into his custody. By this time, his daughter who only knew of herself as Rachel (her SiBirwa name does not appear in the record) was 20 or 21 and had been allowed to leave Gert Greyling ('with a good heifer and three ewes and goats') to marry April, an *inboekeling* of Nicholas Kamper. When given the option of returning with her father to live with him and her mother, she refused, declaring: 'I have no wish to leave either my husband or this district to go with my father, whom I do not recollect or care for now'. She stated that she and April intended instead to return to Greyling's farm at the end of the next harvest.[31] The few cases known of ex-*inboekelinge* wanting to return to their origins suggest that the success rate was low at best.[32]

In this regard, the ex-*inboekelinge* associated with DRC missionary Henri Gonin provide the most detailed examples. Of the tens of ex-*inboekelinge* he encountered, he mentions only one who attempted a reconnection. The others settled with one another as families near to where they had been apprenticed. All were conscious of their origins. In 1888, Gonin appealed on behalf of 20 families of what he called *Orlaamse* located on Welgeval and the adjacent farm Schaapkraal. At the time they were threatened with removal by an impending *plakkers wet* (squatters' law).

> They live on those places, the heads of those people come from different tribes and were taken away as children during the war[s], they served the Boers for 10 to 20 years and some of them are 50 years of age if not 60. They are civilized and have built themselves fairly good houses. Some of them were members of my mission community... Often the elders send their children to work for their former *baasen* they almost always acted according to the laws of the country, they pay their taxes, go on commando if asked to do so, they work hard, they take care when sickness is around, they cannot go back to a *kaffir* location because they have nothing to do with their former *kaffir kapteins*, Mankopane, Mapela, Ramapulane, Malitsi, Zebedela, etc. They don't have any *kaffir* habits any more, they are farmers like the white people.[33]

Accepting one's identity as an ex-slave formed the basis of the emergence of small *oorlamse* communities in the ZAR. Some took root on the fringes of urbanizing Transvaal, but more typical were individual couples like Rachel and April, and small clusters of ex-*inboekelinge* living on farms owned by their masters or by missionaries. In these cases, the fortunes of women were tied to the prospects open to their spouses or created by missionaries for women.

Female Ex-Inboekelinge on Missions

In the late 1850s, ZAR officials began to allow select missionaries to work among Africans. In 1856 the old ZAR nemesis in neighbouring Bechuanaland, Sechele, asked President Pretorius to send him a 'teacher and bricklayer' as a 'symbol of peace'. At the urging of Marico District Field-Cornet Jan Viljoen, Pretorius invited the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS), then operating in Natal, to extend its mission field to the ZAR. In 1857 Heinrich Schröder started an HMS mission at Sechele's, while other HMS stations were soon established in the Transvaal. The Berlin Mission Society and the DRC then followed.[34] The missionaries were reluctantly welcomed by the chiefs residing near Boer farmers, whose suspicions of missionaries ran deep. But white newcomers in collars commonly got the support of Boer officials who, like Paul Kruger, earned considerable sums by selling them some of his farms. Although research into the question is undeveloped, enough evidence from DRC sources indicates that most of the early African mission residents were *inboekelinge* and ex-*inboekelinge* from surrounding Boer farms. Gonin, who in 1864 established his first mission on his newly-purchased farm Welgeval 171, was assisted by September (who read Dutch 'rather well') and his brother January (baptized Petrus), already alluded to, their sister (not mentioned by name) and their wives. Welgeval grew as a residence for them and other families and they helped Gonin establish a school. September (baptised Abraham) and his wife Abrahama (aka Matabela) raised their four children – Fatima, Johana, Isaak and Simon – on the mission. Welgeval was visited regularly by persons with names such as Niklaas, April, and Jakob, indicating they, too, were *oorlamse*.[35] A photograph of early Christians at the HMS mission station at Bethanie (on the farm Losperfontein 119) suggests strongly that they, too, were of *inboekelinge* origin. Their uniformly western dress, adopted

only by a certain few of the chiefly families in the nineteenth century, stands in sharp contrast to the traditional dress worn by African women and men of the time.[36]

Gonin, who revealed very little about African converts and mission-dwellers in his correspondence, leaves enough clues to show that ex-*inboekelinge* played a prominent role in developing the Christian community that grew up around his mission headquarters, which shifted from Welgeval to Saulspoort in 1866. Gonin moved to Saulspoort, capital of chief Kgamanyane of the numerous BaKgatla, to get greater access to indigenous Africans, because *inboekelinge* alone were coming to him at Welgeval. Identified by Gonin only as persons originating from outside the area (mostly from the northern Transvaal), the early converts who formed the nucleus of his following produced the first DRC catechists and teachers. All of the catechists were men, but wives and especially daughters became the bearers of the western, literate culture permeating African societies in the area. Whereas in the case of Paulina, whose her skills in cooking and knowledge of Dutch endeared her to a westernizing, but non-Christian chief, the next generation of African leaders adopted increasingly a western, Christianized appearance and promoted literacy in African languages and English among royal families. Like Paulina, who came ready made to fulfil the role of cook and mother, the wives of the modernizing, monogamous royals were supposed to mirror the achievements of their husbands and raise the new elite's children. Thus the educated daughters of *oorlamse* could vault in status from that of lowly outsider to that of the highest royal rank.

Cases in point are the daughters of Stephanus Moloto, ex-*inboekeling* of Orange Free State Vice President Jacobus Venter, and by death-bed transfer, of Commandant-General Paul Kruger. Known as 'Vieland', he had been captured in the Voortrekker-AmaNdebele clashes of the 1830s, raised by Venter and retired from service by Kruger. An early visitor to Gonin at Welgeval, he was permitted to settle at Schaapkraal, where he raised a family. Already literate and Christian before he met Gonin, he married Hannah Malau, an *inboekeling* from Makooskraal, and they raised three daughters – Martha, Rebecca and Johanna – each of whom became important mission workers for Gonin. Martha and Rebecca married catechists. Johanna, who worked at the Holfontein mission, also may have married but the record is thin. Martha became a prominent figure in the district. After her husband died sometime in the 1890s, she continued working for the mission, joining her sister at Holfontein. Then, in 1904, she married the widower BaKgatla chief of Saulspoort, Ramono Kgamanyane Pilane, and bore two future chiefs.[37] Martha's marriage into the royal Pilane line signifies the process by which African chiefs were redefining their status within southern Africa as it was colonized by Great Britain. In spite of her *inboekeling* origins, which had obstructed Paulina's future and that of her children, Martha's career as a Christian teacher and mission worker elevated her prospects and assured the future of her children. The fact that she was in a Christian marriage guaranteed, too, that she and her sons alone would inherit her husband's estate.

Ramono's first marriage, which ended with his wife Manthlo's death in 1897, shows that educated daughters of literate Christians had been sought after since the 1880s. Manthlo was the daughter of Matsau Motsisi, an LMS catechist of obscure, probably

of *inboekeling*, origin. Matsau, tall and light-skinned, was among the few followers of Ramono's uncle Letsebe, who left the Transvaal in the 1860s and resettled at Sechele's. Letsebe's group responded enthusiastically to LMS evangelizing in Sechele's kingdom, and in 1872 the young Matsau was sent to Moffat Training Institute at Kudumane (Kuruman) for evangelist training. In 1886, after a falling out with the LMS, he attached himself to Linchwe, Ramono's brother and chief of the large BaKgatla group that had migrated to Mochudi in Bechuanaland in 1870. Matsau's daughters Manthlo and Boikanyo were soon married by Ramono and his half-brother Segale, both of whom were emerging as the leading royal Christians among the BaKgatla.[38]

Conclusion

Because of the scarcity of evidence, important questions regarding female slavery in the Transvaal remain unanswerable. It is clear that girls were valued primarily as domestic servants, and that growing up in close proximity to Boer families likely resulted in their adoption of Dutch along with Boer manners. Helping *kaffer* children to become 'civilized' was slavery's justification and testimony to the worthiness of the master in the eyes of the Boer community. In a land where the majority of the population was African and unconquered, Boer farmers needed constant reinforcement of their notions of racial and cultural superiority, and it is no surprise that often they regarded *inboekelinge* and *oorlamse* with affection and retained them into their old age as appendages to Boer families. Needed as submissive allies in the war against 'savagery', they were valued for their imitation of Boer values and given protection as long as they remained distinct from African communities. In the white patriarchal society of the Transvaal, which strongly defended female domesticity, the service of girl slaves was restricted as a rule to the home. The story of Sylvia, who was forced to work in the fields, suggests that female slaves of poorer white immigrants, who were more apt to be short of farm labour, were less apt to remain in the domestic sphere and less likely to be acculturated to the Boer lifestyle. Her bold escape indicates that her master also had fewer means than wealthy Boers to bind their *inboekelinge* to their service. The psychological development of female domestic slaves in homes such as those that could produce a Paulina, must have inculcated among *oorlamse* a self-image of 'high' culture that bred aloofness from Africans around them. But, in practical, daily terms, female *inboekelinge* had to be reminded, too, that they had no place other than as a servant within the Boer family or the larger community. We have at present no way of knowing, moreover, to what extent their role was defined by Boer women or men. The sexual exploitation of female domestic slaves and its attendant profound influence on spousal and familial relationships, which characterized plantation slave societies, appears not to have been significant among the Boer farming community. This suggests that as a rule Boer women exerted controlling influence in their homes and over the domestic servants owned by the patriarch. Privacy, too, was relatively limited in these homes. Living arrangements even among the better-to-do farmers were characteristically plain and close – grandiosity was not in fashion among the Boers, whose manner of acquiring wealth was too uncertain

and subject to reversals to risk putting it into houses and social entertaining other than on a modest scale. It seems that the lack of privacy discouraged intimacy though not large families. We are concerned here with a community led by men who eschewed alcohol, earned their followings within religious sects of the DRC, built personal networks through marriage alliances, and amassed wealth by virtue of holding office. Scandal easily could ruin the ambitious.

It would be tempting to conclude that female domestic slaves, particularly those belonging to the better-to-do families, shared in the prospects of their masters rise in status and increased their security thereby, while accepting the superiority of the Dutch language and the Boer way of life. But to do so would run counter to the stories of Odela, Rachel and the few others of the thousands held in bondage who found a way to escape *inboekstelsel.* Strikingly absent from their brief accounts are yearnings to reconnect with their original families or accusations of physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their owners, leaving the reader to guess their motive for escape apart from the desire for personal freedom or the opportunity to marry and raise children. Not that such motives are insufficient in themselves, but the fact is that they are not clearly stated by ex-*inbokelinge.* The skills acquired among the Boers while enduring years of hardship could serve as a ticket out of servitude and a means of gaining entry into an African society or a Christianized mission community. The answers, therefore, are less likely to be found in the countryside where most *inboekelinge* lived and remained, but rather in the records of literate, mission communities that attracted ex-*inboekinge.* If sufficient of their biographies could be added to the slim pickings offered in this paper, a fuller picture is sure to emerge.

Notes

[1] Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, p. 283n.
[2] Chesson, The Dutch Republics of South Africa, p. 20.
[3] Morton, 'Slavery in South Africa', pp. 251–69.
[4] Khama to DuPlessis, 11 March 1877, Dorsland Trek Documents, A. 779, vol. 2: 23, 26, South African National Archives, Pretoria.
[5] Delius and Trapido, 'Inboekselings and Oorlams', pp. 53–81.
[6] Chesson, *Dutch Republics of South Africa*, pp.19–20.
[7] Boeyens, 'Black Ivory', pp. 187–214.
[8] Erasmus, 'Re-thinking the Great Trek', pp. 58–76.
[9] Schapera, *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*, pp. 66, 68.
[10] Morton, 'Servitude', pp. 222–32.
[11] Erasmus, 'Rethinking the Great Trek,' pp. 73–4.
[12] Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, pp. 80–1; Delius *The Land Belongs to Us*, pp. 98, 101–3, 139.
[13] Sanderson, 'Memorandum of a Trading Trip', p. 242; Aylward, *The Transvaal of To-Day*, p. 150.
[14] Chesson, *Dutch Republics of South Africa*, pp. 19, 21; Struben, *Recollections*, p. 86. Currency values were not standardized in the ZAR at this time, but £6 or £7 would have been the approximate value of a young ox in the Pretoria District. See testimony of Mathibe Kgosi, 27 September 1871, in Bergh and Morton (eds), '*To Make Them Serve*', p. 107.
[15] Morton, 'Captive Labor', p. 173.
[16] Trapido, 'Reflections on Land', pp. 350–68.

[17] Mokgatle, *The Autobiography*, pp. 37–51.
[18] Kruger, *The Memoirs of Paul Kruger*, pp. 42–7; Schapera, *Praise Poems of Tswana Chiefs*. pp. 65–9.
[19] Livingstone, *David Livingstone*, II, pp. 57–8; Baines *Journal of Residence in Africa*, II, pp. 113–4, 123, 131, 170n36, 171–2; Bonner, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires*, pp. 80-1; Bergh, *Geskiedenis Atlas van Suid-Afrika*, p. 156.
[20] Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng*, pp. 39–40.
[21] Morton, 'Captive Labor in the Western Transvaal', pp. 167–85.
[22] *Natal Mercury*, 11 December 1866.
[23] Personal communication, Botlhale Tema.
[24] Kruger, *Memoirs*, p. 47
[25] Regarding Nkhubu (MmaDikeledi) as Mokgatle's first wife, Breutz, *The Tribes of Rustenburg and Pilansberg*, pp. 64–5. For another interpretation, based on more recent oral accounts, Coertze, *Bafokeng Family Law*, pp. 46–8; Mokgatle, *Autobiography*, pp. 40–2.
[26] For the succession, Breutz, *Rustenburg and Pilansberg*, pp. 65–6.
[27] For the accounts of Odela, Adela, Rachel of Langa AmaNdebele, Leah and Sophia, see Chesson, *Dutch Republics of South Africa*, pp. 18–23.
[28] Delius and Trapido, 'Inboekselings and Oorlams', p. 71.
[29] Chesson, *Dutch Republics of South Africa*, p. 20.
[30] *Natal Mercury*, 14 March 1867, 6 Oct. and 14 November 1868; 24 Jun. 1869. *Transvaal Argus*, 21 February, 14 March and 16 May 1867. I am grateful to Barry Morton for these newspaper sources.
[31] Rachel's statement, 6 September 1880, SN 4, N244/80, National Archives of South Africa, Pretoria. For a description of the raids on BaBirwa and other Soutpansberg communities in the 1860s, see Boeyens, 'Black Ivory', pp. 196–202.
[32] Ref. two ex-*inboekelinge* both named 'August. Inclosures 2 and 3 both dated 18 May 1874 in No. 24, *Colonial Office Confidential Prints*, CO 879/7/61, pp. 153, 155. I am grateful to Barry Morton for these sources.
[33] Gonin to P.J. Joubert (Superintendent of Natives), 27 April 1888. 15/7/2(C), DRC Archives, Cape Town. Translation by Wom van den Akker. The chiefs listed were located in the Northern ZAR districts of Waterberg and Soutpansberg.
[34] *Hermannsburger Missionsblatt*, April 1866; Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions*, pp. 284–5; Mignon, *The 19th Century Lutheran Mission*, pp. 4–9; Mbenga and Morton, 'The Missionary as Land Broker', pp. 145–67.
[35] Gonin to DRC, 15 July 1864, 30 December 1865, 15/7/2(E) as well as other Gonin correspondence in 17/5/2 (A), DRC Archives.
[36] Mignon, 19th Century Lutheran Mission in Botswana, p. 26.
[37] Tidimane Pilane and Noel Pilane. The details of Martha's life have been reconstructed from Gonin's correspondence, Ramono's 1918 will and testimony (NA 61/55, NTS 333, South African Archives), and interviews with the late E.S. Moloto (Gaborone, 22 February 1882), Tidimane Pilane (Saulspoort, 4 January 1982), Rev. J. Ramodisa Phiri and England Mpudule Tshomankane (Saulspoort, 6 January 1982). See also Morton 'Cattleholders, Evangelists and Socioeconomic Transformation', pp. 79–98.
[38] Morton, 'Cattleholders, Evangelists and Socioeconomic Transformation', pp. 91–2, 95.

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